



STANFORD UNIVERSITY MEDICAL CENTER

STANFORD, CALIFORNIA 94305 • (415) 321-1200

STANFORD UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF MEDICINE
Department of Genetics

May 20, 1970

Mr. K. M. Reese
News Scripts
Chemical and Engineering News
1155 Sixteenth St., N.W.
Washington, D. C. 20036

Dear Mr. Reese:

On feeding penicillin to guinea pigs (News Scripts, 5/11/70).

Someone must be hatching a brilliant idea for a new use of penicillin as a food additive, which is the sole area of application of the Delaney amendment. (Drugs, pesticides and bathroom deodorizers are categorically excluded. For example, griseofulvin is still available to treat athlete's foot.)

The phrase "cause cancer" can cause problems semantic (as well as medical).

An easy solution: feed compound to 39 mice for 3 months. Look out the window while the pathological slides are under the microscope. This will prove beyond doubt that the compound is safe for 300 million people for a lifetime's worth of consumption.

Sincerely yours,

Joshua Lederberg
Professor of Genetics

NEWS *Scripts*

by K. M. Reese

Penicillin-guinea pig comment scares Prof.

Prof. Thomas K. Sherwood of the University of California, Berkeley, foresees "a frightening sequence of events coming up" as a result of a statement that appeared here to the effect that penicillin is fatal to guinea pigs (C&EN, March 23, page 106).

Some eager medical research man with a subconscious yen for publicity will have read the item, says chemical engineer Sherwood. He will feed pen-

icillin to a great many guinea pigs, will dissect each one when it expires, and in course of time will find one with a malignant tumor. The fact will be reported to the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. Under the Delaney amendment, HEW will be forced to ban the sale of penicillin. Hundreds of thousands will die or be debilitated because of infections.

C'mon, Sherwood. Nothing like that can happen in a modern, largely franchised, technological society!